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Freedom is neither free nor borrowed

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While I have consistently opposed the Bush administration's Iraq policy and the borrow-and-spend agenda of the Republican Congress, America's obligations and responsibilities must be paid for. Hurricane victims, our troops, working families and future generations deserve action and fiscal responsibility from policy-makers, not gimmicks and games.

First, stop digging the deficit deeper. All future spending, including the cost of Katrina and Rita, must be paid for with a combination of spending cuts and increased revenues, not more borrowing. All of the proposed tax giveaways, like President Bush's plan to permanently repeal the estate tax, which would provide no benefit to 99 percent of Americans while adding \$740 billion to the deficit over 10 years, should be rejected outright as extravagant excesses.

Second, paying for the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and the U.S. commitment in Iraq require a significant infusion of revenue into the federal budget along with a shared sacrifice to pay for our nation's obligations. Previous tax giveaways should be rescinded.

Finally, cutting spending is important. Unfortunately, the majority party would rather cut student loans and health care for children than pork barrel spending. Examples of wasteful spending include weapons systems that don't work and NASA's proposed mission to Mars. In Iraq, wasteful spending is out of control. In fact, it was reported last week that \$1 billion was stolen from Iraq's defense budget through corrupt contracting.

Not borrowing, but paying for Iraq, Katrina and Rita will require much-needed leadership and courage from the White House and Congress. With our nation facing urgent needs at home and around the world, the often-quoted phrase "freedom isn't free," should be expanded to include, "nor is freedom borrowed."

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